

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

November 2, 2009
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger, Deputy Mayor Balducci, and Councilmembers Bonincontri, Chelminiak, Creighton, Davidson, and Lee

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Balducci opened the meeting at 6:02 p.m. and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately one hour to discuss one item of potential litigation and one item of property acquisition.

The Study Session resumed at 7:28 p.m., with Mayor Degginger presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Management Brief regarding Howard Hanson Dam

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Howard Hanson Dam and the potential risk for flooding this fall and winter.

Vernon Owens, Acting Emergency Preparedness Manager, provided an update on the Howard Hanson Dam. He explained that more water than usual might have to be released from the dam this winter, which will have direct and indirect impacts for Bellevue, including possible flooding. The Fire Department is working with other departments to develop a plan of action that includes assisting employees who might be affected, public outreach, shelters, transportation impacts, and water rescue operations.

The Parks Department is attending regional workshops to address potential shelter requests, and all Bellevue community centers are on standby. The Utilities Department is modeling the potential for flooding and the impact on Bellevue's waste and storm water systems. Human Resources has identified all employees who reside in the flood plain area. This information is being used to plan for staffing-related disruptions of services if major flooding occurs.

The Fire Department's Emergency Preparedness Division has provided workshops for citizens, business, and City employees. Bellevue staff are working in cooperation with King County to share information and to address shelter, transportation, and other needs. Flooding could have significant impacts on highways 167, 169 and I-405. Power outages are likely to occur as well. Mr. Owens noted Internet links for additional information including the City of Bellevue's web site (www.bellevuewa.gov). All citizens identified in the flood plain area are recommended to obtain flood insurance.

Responding to Councilmember Creighton, Mr. Owens said 42 employees live directly in the flood plain, and 225 live in the outlying areas.

Responding to Councilmember Bonincontri, Mr. Owens said that 95 percent of the sewage and wastewater produced in Bellevue goes to the south plant in Renton. With the potential for flooding, there are concerns about backups in the system.

Utilities Director Denny Vidmar added that there is no danger of the treatment plant itself being flooded, because it was constructed to be at least 10 feet above the flood plain elevation. However, there is a concern that the flood water could exceed the capacity of the plant. King County is modeling the situation, and its strategy is to attempt to have overflows occur where they would have the least impact (i.e., into larger bodies of water). The risk of backups in homes or businesses in Bellevue is very small and is not likely to occur.

Deputy Mayor Balducci thanked staff for the presentation and for the good work that went into preparing informational materials for public workshops and the Council.

Councilmember Lee reported that during the last Regional Transit Committee meeting, there was a briefing on the regional emergency transportation plan.

Mayor Degginger thanked staff for the update, and for their work in keeping the community safe.

(b) Memorandum responding to Citizen Request relating to Potential Flooding Issues at Lake Bellevue

Mr. Vidmar introduced Phyllis Varner, Utilities Department, and Lacey Madche, Assistant City Attorney, to describe the City's response to a citizen's request related to potential flooding issues at Lake Bellevue. Mr. Vidmar explained that the City has two roles with regard to the situation. One is to facilitate conversations between the Burlington Northern Railroad and the property owners on Lake Bellevue, and the other is to prepare for emergency response. The City has been working with all parties nearly daily, which included a site visit involving property owners and BNSF representatives. Mr. Vidmar said staff hopes the issue will be resolved by mid-week.

Mr. Vidmar provided background information regarding the site and the problems occurring due to vegetation in the lake's outlet stream channel located on BNSF Railroad property. The City property within the basin is NE 12th Street and 120th Avenue NE. Lake Bellevue was developed

within the basin in the 1980s, and most of the buildings are 4-5 feet above water. The lowest to the lake is the Crab Pot Restaurant.

Mr. Vidmar described the problems associated with an overgrowth of vegetation in the outlet stream channel on BNSF property. There is a 36-inch culvert underneath the railway. However, at some point a 24-inch culvert was placed inside of the larger structure. The BNSF Railroad fixed that situation approximately a year ago and removed the vegetation. This summer the vegetation grew back and slowed the flow of water, at which time property owners contacted the BNSF Railroad. The property owners then contacted the City.

Mr. Vidmar described a problem related to the sinking of the Crab Pot parking lot, as well as the sinking of all of the properties. Condominiums on the lake removed asphalt and installed blocks of styrofoam covered by paving.

The primary issue of concern to the City is a sewage holding tank under the Crab Pot restaurant, which if flooded could cause sewage flow into the lake. Mr. Vidmar said the City's emergency plan is predicated on preventing such an incident. The City's plan indicates that if the BNSF Railroad does not remedy the situation, and if there is one inch of rain forecast within a 24-hour period, the City will work to remove vegetation from the channel. Staff has shared the plan with citizens who appeared before the Council last week. While still concerned, the property owners understand the City's role as a partner in avoiding structural flooding.

Mr. Vidmar said the BNSF Railroad has indicated it will have a decision this week. They have hired a hydrologist and want to ensure that the vegetation is the cause of the restricted flow to the lake. City staff is of the opinion that this is the cause of the problem.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Vidmar said the 36-inch culvert is adequate to carry the water flow. However, getting the water to the culvert is the problem.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Vidmar said the sewage tank under the restaurant is needed because its system is lower than the local sewer system. The tank is a temporary reservoir from which sewage is periodically pumped up into the City's wastewater system.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Vidmar said the current situation is not an emergency. However if significant rain occurs and BNSF has not taken any action, City staff will work to clear vegetation in the channel and to install a pump if needed. In further response, Mr. Vidmar said the City will seek financial reimbursement from BNSF if staff's intervention is needed.

Deputy Mayor Balducci thanked staff for their work on this issue, and expressed some surprise that BNSF has been so hesitant to address the vegetation overgrowth.

Mayor Degginger thanked staff for the presentation and its work with the community.

3. Council Business [Regular Session Agenda Item 6]

- Councilmember Creighton moved to appoint John Bruels to the Human Services Commission, and Deputy Mayor Balducci seconded the motion.
- The motion to appoint John Bruels to the Human Services Commission carried by a vote of 7-0.

Dr. Davidson attended meetings of MWPAAC and the Cascade Water Alliance Board. The former included a discussion of emergency planning for the wastewater treatment facility south of Bellevue, in light of potential flooding from the Howard Hanson Dam.

Deputy Mayor Balducci provided an update on the process to update the regional Transportation 2040 Plan. The last meeting of the pricing task force was held last week, during which the group finalized its recommendation to be submitted to the Transportation Policy Board. One key issue was the group's recommendation for a substitute to the gas tax, as the gas tax's buying power declines and before a full highway tolling system is in place. The likely mechanism is a VMT (vehicle miles traveled) fee. A second key issue of discussion related to the unconstrained portion of the Transportation 2040 Plan, which contains \$200 billion in projects that are not funded. There were arguments to eliminate full system tolling and parking surcharges at this time, because it is not yet known if the region will be able to implement the projects. Ms. Balducci said she supported this perspective.

Councilmember Lee reminded everyone to vote and to mail their ballots by tomorrow.

Mayor Degginger attended a meeting of the I-405 tolling executive committee, which has been appointed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to study its analysis of potential funding alternatives for HOT lane projects on I-405. He attended a meeting of the Cascade Water Alliance Board, which included discussion about the steps to finalize the closing of the Lake Tapps purchase in December or early January.

Mayor Degginger attended the first pancreatic cancer walk at Bellevue College, which involved 600 participants and raised more than \$35,000.

At 7:59 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

/kaw